

84 53. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the master gaming controller designed or configured to provide player tracking services by performing player tracking functions further comprising:
receiving player tracking information from remote gaming devices.

REMARKS

Claims 1-44 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1-48 were rejected. Claims 1, 24, and 44 have been amended. Claims 45 and 46 have been cancelled. Please add claims 49-53.

Applicant respectfully thanks the examiner for his time in the telephone interview on Jan. 9, 2003. In the interview, the final office action by the examiner was discussed. The examiner agreed that in the Walker reference (6,113, 492), it is not clear where the player tracking software used to control the player tracking devices (e.g., display 162, keypad 164 and card reader 166) in the player tracking card reader 160 is executed.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

The examiner rejected claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 23, 24, 32, 34, 37-39, 41, 42-46 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being clearly anticipated by Walker, U.S. Patent 6, 113, 492. The applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

The present invention provides a gaming machine for generating a game of chance and providing player tracking services. The gaming machine, as recited in claim 1 as amended, may comprise "a master gaming controller mounted within the housing designed or configured i) to control one or more games played on the gaming machine, ii) to provide player tracking services by performing player tracking functions comprising: a) evaluating player tracking events, b) directly controlling operating features of a plurality of physical devices in response to the player tracking events, c) executing player tracking software that allows the plurality of physical devices to perform the functions of a player tracking unit; wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit." By allowing the master gaming controller to execute player tracking software that allows the plurality of physical devices to perform the functions of a player tracking unit, a separate player tracking hardware unit may be eliminated from the gaming machine.

In Walker (see FIG. 1), a separate player tracking hardware unit (160) with player tracking devices including the display 162, keypad 164 and card reader 166 is shown. The player tracking unit 160 is coupled to the gaming machine and is shown as a separate device connected to the gaming machine 100. As noted by the examiner, it is not clear from the Walker reference where the player tracking software used to control the player tracking devices (e.g., display 162, keypad 164 and card reader 166) in the player tracking card reader 160 is executed. Applicant agrees with the examiner that player tracking card reader device 160 is connected to the CPU 110. However, the applicant asks the examiner to consider that the player tracking device 160 is referenced as a separate block from the gaming machine 100 where direct connections from the CPU 110 to the player tracking devices, 162, 164 and 166 in the device 160 are not shown. Explicit control of the player tracking devices, 162, 164 and 166, by the CPU is not described in Walker. This contrasts with devices such as hopper and the slot reels in FIG. 1, which Walker's describes as explicitly controlled by the CPU 110, where direct connections are shown to the controller's for these devices. Thus, one in skill in the art would likely conclude that Walker teaches a separate player tracking hardware unit with its own processor coupled to the gaming machine which is well known in the art (See Acre's references). In the present invention, the master gaming controller can execute player tracking software that allows a plurality of physical devices to perform the functions of a player tracking unit without a separate player tracking hardware unit. Since in Walker, where the player tracking software is executed is not clear and a separate player tracking unit is taught, Walker can't be said to anticipate the limitations as recited in claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 23, 24, 32, 34, 37-39, 41, 42-44.

In the final office action, examiner states, "Walker additionally teaches the gaming machine is capable of providing player-tracking services without a player-tracking unit (See Col 5: 27-33). Col 5: 27-33 in Walker states that "It should be noted that this require invention does not require a physical slot machine, and could instead be embodied completely in software." The pending claims describe a gaming machine or methods that are implemented on a gaming machine, such as a physical slot machine. Thus, Walker can't be said to anticipate the claims of the present invention which recite a gaming machine "wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit." For at least these reasons, the Walker reference can't be said to anticipate claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 23, 24, 32, 34, 37-39, 41, 42 and 44 and the rejection is believed overcome thereby.

The applicant also respectfully submits that the additional limitations recited in claims 49-53, which describe additional player tracking functions that may be performed by the master gaming controller, are also patentably distinct over Walker.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The examiner rejected claim 5, 8, 35 and 40 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker in view of Acres, U.S. Patent 6, 317, 852. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As described above, Walker teaches a separate player tracking hardware unit connected to the gaming machine. Acres clearly describes a player tracking unit with a processor for operating devices in the player tracking unit so that it functions as a player tracking unit. The player tracking unit in Acres is designed to be coupled to a gaming machine to provide player tracking services. Therefore, Walker, Acres or the combination of Walker and Acres do not teach or suggest a gaming machine “wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit.” Thus, for at least these reasons, the combination of Walker in View of Acres can’t be said to render obvious claim 5, 8, 35 and 4 and the rejection is believed overcome thereby.

The examiner rejected claim 9, 10, 25-31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker in view of Lichtman, U.S. 5, 819, 107. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As described above, Walker teaches a separate player tracking hardware unit connected to the gaming machine. Lichtman does not describe player tracking functions. Thus, Walker, Lichtman, or the combination of Walker and Lichtman do not teach or suggest a gaming machine “wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit.” Thus, for at least these reasons, the combination of Walker in View of Lichtman can’t be said to render obvious claim 9, 10, 25-31 and the rejection is believed overcome thereby.

The examiner rejected claim 13, 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker in view of Boushy, U.S. 6, 183, 362. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As described above, Walker teaches a separate player tracking hardware unit connected to the gaming machine. Boushy describes player tracking but does not provide details of the operation of player tracking units or the associated gaming machines in regards to control of the devices on the gaming machine and the player tracking unit. Walker, Boushy, or the combination of Walker and Boushy do not teach or suggest a gaming machine “wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking

hardware unit.” Thus, for at least these reasons, the combination of Walker in View of Boushy can’t be said to render obvious claim 13 and 14 and the rejection is believed overcome thereby.


The examiner rejected claim 17, 21, 22, 33 and 36 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker in view of Acres, U.S. 5,702, 304. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As described above, Walker teaches a separate player tracking hardware unit connected to the gaming machine. Acre’s clearly describes a player tracking unit with a processor for operating devices in the player tracking unit so that it functions as a player tracking unit. The player tracking unit in Acre’s is designed to be coupled to a gaming machine to provide player tracking services. Thus, Walker, Acres or the combination of Walker and Acres do not teach or suggest a gaming machine “wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit.” Thus, for at least these reasons, the combination of Walker in View of Acres can’t be said to render obvious claim 17, 21, 22, 33 and 36 and the rejection is believed overcome thereby.

The examiner rejected claim 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Walker in view of Pease, U.S. 5,766,076 and Kelly U.S. 6,293,865. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As described above, Walker teaches a separate player tracking hardware unit connected to the gaming machine. Pease describes a separate player tracking hardware unit connected to gaming machine. Kelly does not describe player tracking units. Therefore, Walker, Pease, Kelly or the combinations of Walker, Pease and Kelly do not teach or suggest a gaming machine “wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit” Thus, for at least these reasons, the combination of Walker in View of Kelly and Pease can’t be said to render obvious claim 20 and the rejection is believed overcome thereby.

Applicant believes that all pending claims are allowable and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance for this application from the Examiner. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the undersigned can be reached at the telephone number set out below.

Respectfully submitted,
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APPENDIX A

1. (Twice Amended) A gaming machine comprising:

a housing;

a master gaming controller mounted within the housing designed or configured i) to control one or more games played on the gaming machine, ii) to provide player tracking services by performing player tracking functions comprising:

a) evaluating player tracking events,

b) directly controlling operating features of a plurality of physical devices in response to the player tracking events,

c) executing player tracking software that allows the plurality of physical devices to perform the functions of a player tracking unit;

wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit;

[c) receiving player tracking information from the physical devices,

d) displaying player tracking information to the physical devices,

e) tracking game usage by individual players using the gaming machine,

f) transmitting player tracking information to remote gaming devices and

g) receiving player tracking information from remote gaming devices;]

a main display coupled to the housing used to display the one or more games controlled by the master gaming controller;

one or more input devices coupled to the housing for accepting indicia of credit wherein the indicia of credit are for making wagers on the games played on the gaming machine;

one or more output devices coupled to the housing for dispensing the indicia of credit;

one or more input devices coupled to the housing for inputting the player tracking information into the gaming machine wherein the input devices are among the plurality of physical devices directly controlled by the master gaming controller;

a communication interface coupled to the housing for communicating at least the player tracking information between the gaming machine and the remote gaming devices.

2. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, further comprising:

a memory storing player tracking software that allows the master gaming controller to perform the player tracking functions.

3. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the input device for inputting the player tracking information is selected from the group consisting of a card reader, a key pad, a touch screen, a microphone, a wire-less communication interface, or a bar code reader.

4. The gaming machine of claim 1, further comprising at least one display device for displaying the player tracking information.

5. The gaming machine of claim 4, wherein the display device is a monitor, a LCD, a fluorescent display, or a sound projection device.

6. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the game is a mechanical slot game, a video slot game, a keno game or a video poker game.

7. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the communication interface is connected to a network.

8. The gaming machine of claim 7, wherein the network is a casino area network, wide area progressive network, bonus game network or a cashless system network.

9. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 2, wherein the memory stores software for one or more device drivers that allow the master gaming controller to operate at least some of the input devices.

10. The gaming machine of claim 9, wherein the device driver uses a communication protocol including Netplex, USB, Ethernet, Firewire, direct memory map, PCI, serial and parallel.

11. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 2, wherein the memory stores software for one or more device interfaces that allow the master gaming controller to detect the player tracking events from the physical devices directly controlled by the master gaming controller.

12. The gaming machine of claim 11, wherein the device interface is a card reader, a monitor, a display, or key pad.

13. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the communication interface is connected to at least two different networks using the same communication connection.

14. The gaming machine of claim 13, wherein the communication connection is Ethernet.

15. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein one of the remote gaming devices is a player tracking server.

16. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 2, wherein the master gaming controller includes a memory storing software for receiving the player tracking events from the remote gaming devices.

17. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the player tracking information is at least one of a player name, a time, a date, an amount wagered, a location, and a type of game.

18. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 2, wherein the memory stores software that allows the master gaming controller to receive at least player tracking information from the remote gaming devices and to send at least player tracking information to the remote gaming devices using one or more communication protocols.

19. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 18, wherein the communication protocol is selected from the group consisting of a manufacturer player tracking communication protocol and TCP/IP communication protocol.

20. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the gaming machine is capable of receiving player tracking information from one or more of a magnetic-striped card, a smart card, a personal digital assistant, a finger print reader, a wire-less device, a sound device and a bar-coded ticket.

21. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 2, wherein the master gaming controller includes a memory storing software that allows the master gaming controller to detect power- failures.

22. (Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, further comprising:
a non-volatile memory for storing player tracking events.

23. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the communication interface includes a wire-less communication interface.

24. (Twice Amended) A method for providing player tracking services on a gaming machine_with i) a housing, ii) a master gaming controller mounted within the housing that controls a plurality of physical devices used to present games and to provide player tracking services on the gaming machine, iii) a main display coupled to the housing used to display the games, iv) one or more input devices coupled to the housing for accepting indicia of credit for wagering on the games, v) one or more output devices for dispensing the indicia of credit; vi) one or more input devices coupled to the housing for inputting the player tracking information into the gaming machine; and vii) a communication interface coupled to the housing for communicating with remote gaming devices, the method comprising:

loading player tracking software into a memory utilized by the master gaming controller on the gaming machine wherein the player tracking software is for allowing the master gaming controller to directly control operating features of the plurality of physical devices used to provide player tracking services on the gaming machine;

receiving a player tracking [related] event from at least one of the physical devices and the remote gaming devices;

evaluating the player tracking event using the player tracking software; and

in response to the player tracking event, controlling operation features of the physical devices with the master gaming controller to provide the player tracking services wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the player tracking software includes player tracking device interfaces, player tracking device drivers, player tracking event evaluators, and player tracking communication protocol translators.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the player tracking device driver is for a card reader, a monitor, a key pad, or a display.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein the player tracking device drivers utilize a communication protocol selected from the group including Netplex, USE, Ethernet, Firewire, PCI, direct memory map, Serial and Parallel.

28. The method of claim 25, wherein the player tracking device interfaces are selected from the group consisting of card readers, key pads and displays.

29. The method of claim 25, wherein when a first player tracking device driver is replaced with a second player tracking device driver different from said first player tracking device driver, the player tracking device interface corresponding to said first player tracking device driver and said second player tracking device driver is not changed.

30. (Amended) The method of claim 24, further comprising translating the player tracking information to a communication protocol used by one of the remote gaming devices.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the communication protocol is selected from the group consisting of a manufacturer player tracking protocol and TCP/IP.

32. (Amended) The method of claim 24, further comprising:
sending player tracking information one of the remote gaming devices using the communication interface wherein the one gaming device is a player tracking server.

33. (Amended) The method of claim 32, wherein the player tracking information is at least one of a player name, a time, a date, an amount wagered, a location, and a type of game.

34. (Amended) The method of claim 24, further comprising displaying player tracking information to a display device controlled by the master gaming controller.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein the display device is a monitor, a fluorescent screen, an LCD or a sound projection device.

36. The method of claim 24, further comprising storing a player tracking event to a non-volatile memory.

37. (Amended)The method of claim 24, further comprising tracking game usage by individual players using the gaming machine.

38. (Amended) The method of claim 37, further comprising:
receiving player tracking information from the physical devices wherein the physical devices are selected from the group consisting of is a card reader, a touch screen, a key pad, panel buttons, a display and a bar-code reader.

39. The method of claim 24, wherein the communication interface is connected to a network.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein the network is a casino area network, wide area progressive network, bonus game network, or a cashless system network.

41. The method of claim 24, wherein the gaming machine is a slot machine, a video slot machine, a keno game, or a video poker game

42. The method of claim 24, wherein the player tracking event is an encapsulated information packet.

43. The method of claim 24, wherein the player tracking event is sent to two or more destinations.

44. (Twice Amended) At least one computer readable medium containing a program for providing player tracking services on a gaming machine with i) a housing, ii) a master gaming controller mounted within the housing that controls a plurality of physical devices used to present games and to provide player tracking services on the gaming machine, iii) a main

display coupled to the housing used to display the games, iv) one or more input devices coupled to the housing for accepting indicia of credit for wagering on the games, v) one or more output devices for dispensing the indicia of credit; vi) one or more input devices coupled to the housing for inputting the player tracking information into the gaming machine; and vii) a communication interface coupled to the housing for communicating with remote gaming devices, the said at least one computer medium comprising:

computer readable code for loading player tracking software into a memory utilized by the master gaming controller on the gaming machine wherein the player tracking software is for allowing the master gaming controller to individually control the plurality of physical devices used to provide player tracking services on the gaming machine;

computer readable code for receiving a player tracking related event from at least one of the physical devices and the remote gaming devices;

computer readable code for evaluating the player tracking event using the player tracking software; and

computer readable code for in response to the player tracking event, controlling operation features of the physical devices with the master gaming controller to provide the player tracking services wherein the player tracking services are provided without a separate player tracking hardware unit including player tracking devices and a processor for executing player tracking software to operate the player tracking hardware unit.

45. Cancelled.

46. Cancelled.

47. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the gaming machine is capable of providing the player tracking services using two or more of the following physical devices coupled to the housing and directly controlled by the master gaming controller: a) the main display, b) a secondary display different from the main display, c) a card reader, d) a key pad, e) a touch screen, f) a microphone, g) a wire-less communication interface, h) a bar code reader, i) input buttons on the gaming machine and j) combinations thereof.

48. The method of claim 24, wherein the gaming machine is capable of providing the player tracking services using two or more of the following physical devices coupled to the housing and directly controlled by the master gaming controller: a) the main display, b) a

secondary display different from the main display, c) a card reader, d) a key pad, e) a touch screen, f) a microphone, g) a wire-less communication interface, h) a bar code reader, i) input buttons on the gaming machine and j) combinations thereof.

49. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the master gaming controller designed or configured to provide player tracking services by performing player tracking functions further comprising:

receiving player tracking information from the physical devices.

50. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the master gaming controller designed or configured to provide player tracking services by performing player tracking functions further comprising:

displaying player tracking information to the physical devices.

51. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the master gaming controller designed or configured to provide player tracking services by performing player tracking functions further comprising:

tracking game usage by individual players using the gaming machine.

52. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the master gaming controller designed or configured to provide player tracking services by performing player tracking functions further comprising:

tracking game usage by individual players using the gaming machine.

53. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the master gaming controller designed or configured to provide player tracking services by performing player tracking functions further comprising:

receiving player tracking information from remote gaming devices.